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ABSTRACT

It is pointed out in this Digest that there is an imbalance between the number of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American teachers and the percentage of children of similar ethnic backgrounds in the schools. The growing minority student enrollment in public schools has increased the demand for proportional minority teacher representation. Factors contributing to shortages of minority teachers are discussed. References in the ERIC database are cited. (JD)

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DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF MINORITY TEACHERS

ERIC Digest 12-88

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CLEARINGHOUSE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-SP 12-88

Demand and Supply of Minority Teachers

Over the past decade, educators and policymakers have expressed concern about minority teacher shortages. As minority student enrollment in public schools increases, the population of minority teachers decreases. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) (1988) cautions that if a national intervention policy is not instituted to reverse this trend, the faces of minority teachers will disappear from the nation's classrooms.

Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American teachers are important role models to both minority and majority students growing up in an environment of diverse cultures and ethnicity. The American Council on Education (ACE) (1988) emphasized that the absence or lack of role models for minority students would result in educational deficits for the nation's youth. Such a deficit would threaten America's future prosperity and ability to compete when compared to other industrialized nations of the world.

The demand and supply of teachers is balanced if the number of available teaching positions are equal to the number of teachers needed to fill these positions. If, for any reason this balance is offset, then those most concerned with the education of our children are alarmed.

Is There an Increased Demand for Minority Teachers?

Recent estimates from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1989) show that the number of public school teachers has increased from 2.2 million in the fall of 1988 to 2.3 million in the fall of 1989. This represents a 1.9 percent increase in 1989, suggesting that the current demand for teachers at the national level is fairly stable.

Hecker (1986) and Feistritzer (1986) share the view that no real teacher shortages are anticipated. They argue that the supply of teachers, like any other labor market, will equal demand. Hecker contends that salary increases and the status of the profession will lure enough individuals to fill the projected aggregate demand for teachers between 1990 and 1995.

Contrary to this view, data collected by the National Education Association (NEA) (1986) indicate that 32,000 teaching vacancies exist in 100 of the largest school districts, with 79 districts facing a real teacher shortage for the following year. The Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession estimates that between 1986 and 1992, 1.3 million new teachers will be needed. Earlier projections from NCES (1985) estimated that the annual demand for teachers will increase from 165,000 in 1986 to 215,000 in 1992. The pool of new teacher graduates available to meet this demand will shrink from 87 percent to less than 65 percent within the same period.

Disaggregating the NEA data (1987) by race, minorities account for only 10.3 percent of the teaching force. In fact, the proportion of public school teachers who are minorities has decreased from 12.2 percent in 1977 to 10.5 percent in 1985 (NCES 1988). Black children represent 16.2 percent of the students in public school, however, black teachers constitute only 6.9 percent of the teaching force. Hispanics represent 9.1 percent of the children in public school but only 1.9 percent of the teaching force. Asian/Pacific Islanders represent 2.5 percent of the children in public school but only 0.9 percent of the teachers. American Indians/Alaskan Natives represent 0.9 percent of the children in public schools, but only 0.6 percent of the teachers. These numbers are startling once you consider that whites represent 71.2 percent of the children in the public school but 89.7 percent of the teachers (OERI 1987, NEA 1987).

Is There a Decreased Supply of Minority Teachers?

The nation will need approximately 200,000 teachers each year to meet the NCES 1992 projections (NCES 1985). Roth (1985) suggests that supply will not meet demand. Although the overall supply of teachers as a percentage of demand roughly balanced in 1984 at 102.8 percent, such percentages will decrease steadily through 1992 to 65.6 percent of demand. ACE (1989) reported similar data noting that degrees awarded in education between 1979-80 and 1985-86 academic years decreased by 26 percent for bachelors, 26 percent for masters and 10 percent for doctorates.

Although the number of teachers produced each year is gradually increasing, the reverse is the case with minority teachers. The percentage of first-year minority students enrolled in historically black colleges and universities who intended to major in education fell from 13.4 percent in 1977 to 8.7 percent in 1986 (Astin 1977, 1987). AACTE's 1987 enrollment data indicate that minority participation in K-12 and postsecondary education is significantly higher than their participation in Schools, Colleges and Departments of Education (SCDEs). Thirty-three (33) out of fifty (50) states have minority K-12 enrollment of more than 20 percent and of these, only six states have minority SCDE enrollments that exceed 15 percent (AACTE 1988).

Are There Factors Contributing to Shortages of Minority Teachers?

The growing minority student enrollment in public schools has increased the demand for proportional minority teacher representation. Minority K-12 enrollment increases are largely due to the baby boomers of the post war era who are now having their own children, the high fertility rate of certain minority groups and to the continued influx of immigrants to the United States (Allen and Turner 1988).

Over the past decade, interest in the teaching profession declined from 19.3 percent in 1970 to 6.2 percent in 1985. Low teacher salaries that are not competitive with salaries of most

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other professions partially explain the decline. Although there is a recent reversal in this trend, lost ground in the number of teachers has not been fully regained. Excluding Hispanics, the number for other minority groups actually declined (Darling-Hammond 1987).

An estimated 900,000 teachers retiring in the next decade (Watts 1986) threatens to exacerbate teacher shortages unless aggressive efforts to attract, train and retain more teachers are made. A teacher attrition rate estimated between 6 to 8 percent annually due to resignation or migration to other professions further contributes to this shortage. Raised standards through increased testing have also adversely affected the supply of minority teachers. According to some reports, the passing rates of minorities of these tests are significantly lower than those of their white counterparts (Wilson and Melendez 1987).

Summary

Based on the data reviewed it is safe to conclude that the supply of minority teachers is limited, however there are significant numbers to recruit. While there are some programs targeted towards increasing the number of minority teachers, more are needed. Successful institutional programs typically reflect genuine concern, commitment, collaboration and creativity. Broad-based commitment is needed from all segments of society to increase the supply of minority teachers. The nation cannot wait until the shortage of minority teachers is a crisis.

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